

Key Findings of the Application of the Criteria for Accreditation, AY 2022

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Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the findings from the comprehensive evaluations conducted in academic year (AY) 2022, September 2021 – August 2022. The analysis addresses the differences across institutional context, examines how HLC member institutions meet the Criteria for Accreditation over the years, and explores the areas of challenge faced by the institutions. Below are some takeaways from the analysis.

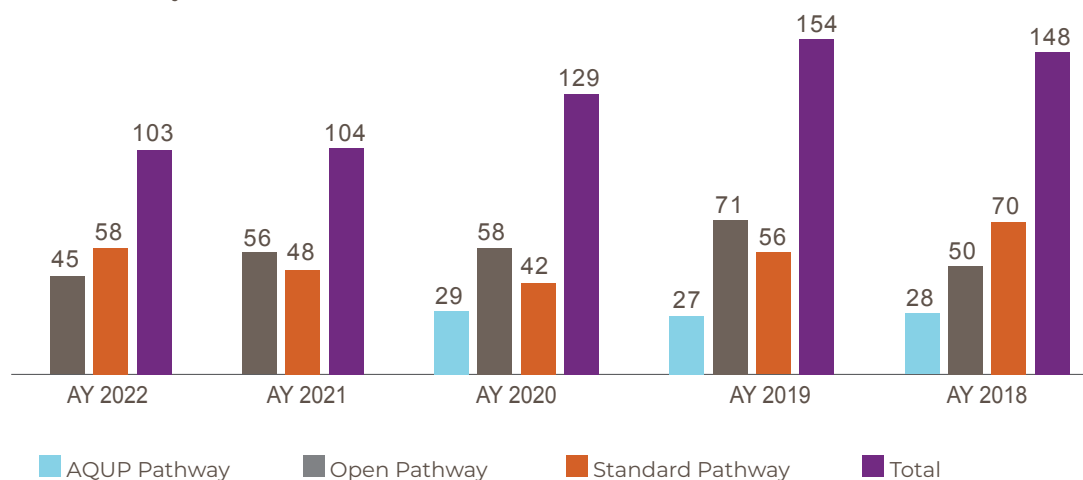
- The overall outcomes of the AY 2022 comprehensive evaluations were consistent with the improvement trend in recent years. The percentage of HLC institutions meeting the standards of quality under the Criteria for Accreditation without concerns has improved 9 percentage points since AY 2018.
- The most frequently cited Core Components, showing a persistent pattern in the last five years, include 3.C (sufficiency of faculty and staff), 4.A (ensuring quality of educational offerings), 4.B (assessment of student learning), 4.C (persistence, retention, and completion outcomes), 5.B (resource base), and 5.C (systematic and integrated planning and improvement).
- Core Component 4.B continued to be the most frequently cited area of concern, with citations in 32% of all comprehensive evaluations. The proportion of institutions with citations in Core Component 4.B increased 4 percentage points from last year’s level, which had shown a noticeable decline when compared to the preceding years.
- An examination of the most frequently cited Core Components by Carnegie Classification provides further information on the specific areas of challenge by institutional sector.
- The insights gained from this analysis of comprehensive evaluations help guide HLC’s efforts to revise the Criteria for Accreditation, as well as strengthen support and resources to meet the needs of the membership.

Overview

In AY 2022 HLC conducted 103 comprehensive evaluations, of which 64 (62%) were reviews for reaffirmation of accreditation and 39 (38%) were Assurance Reviews. As seen in Figure 1, among the evaluated institutions, 45 (44%) were in Open Pathway and 58 (56%) institutions were in Standard Pathway.

Figure 1. Number of Scheduled Comprehensive Evaluations by Pathway, AY 2018–AY 2022

Note: AQIP Pathway was sunset in 2020.



Public institutions accounted for nearly half of the evaluations in AY 2022 (49 institutions, 48% of the total), followed by private not-for-profit institutions (n=46, 45%), tribal colleges (n=4, 4%), and private for-profit (n=4, 4%). The overall distribution of evaluated institutions by control closely resembled the previous year's level.

Considering the institutional Carnegie Classification¹, associate's colleges accounted for the largest group (n=32, 31% of the total), followed by baccalaureate colleges (n=31, 30%), master's institutions (n=27, 26%), doctoral (n=5, 5%), doctoral/professional universities (n=4, 4%), and tribal colleges (n=4, 4%). This distribution varied slightly from the overall membership composition, where associate's colleges account for 33%, baccalaureate 28%, master's 22%, doctoral 8%, doctoral/professional 6%, and tribal institutions 3%.

Outcomes

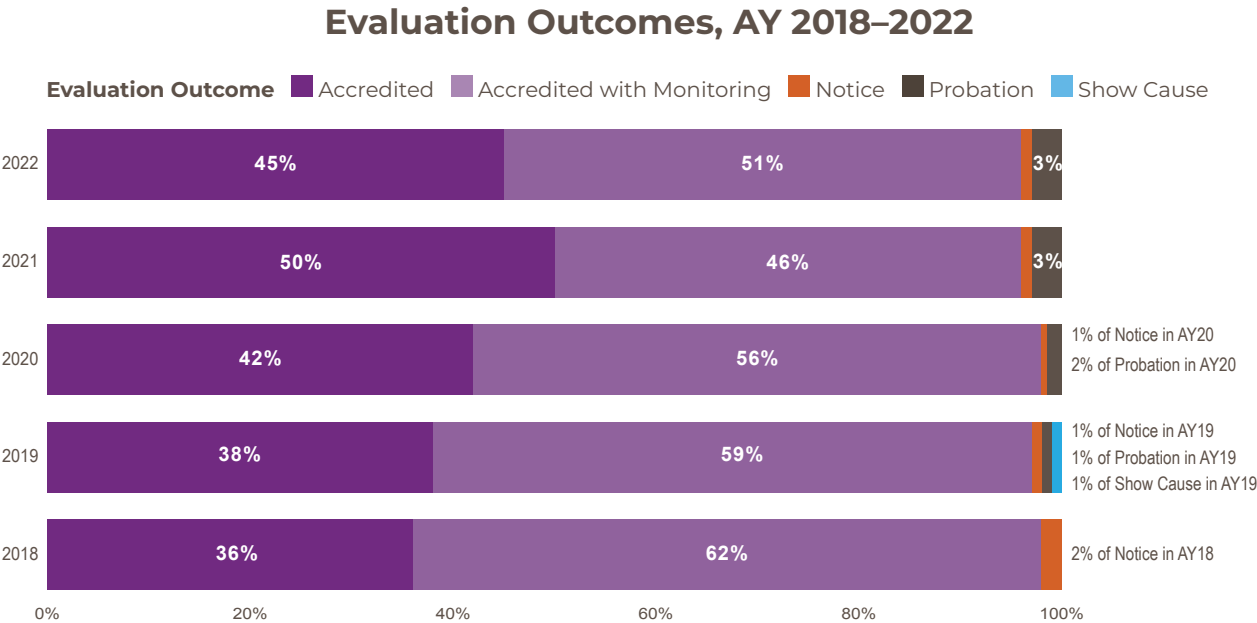
Please note: The outcomes analysis reflects all but one comprehensive evaluation conducted in AY 2022. The one outstanding does not have a final decision at time of publishing.

The overall outcomes of the 102 comprehensive evaluations in AY 2022 were as follows:

- 46 institutions (45%) merited continued accreditation without concerns,
- 52 institutions (51%) earned continued accreditation with concerns and were assigned interim monitoring, and
- 4 institutions (4%) were placed on sanction, including 1 institution on Notice and 3 institutions on Probation.

In comparison to the evaluation outcomes in the previous year (AY 2021), as seen in Figure 2, the proportion of institutions with assigned interim monitoring increased 5 percentage points, while the proportion of institutions placed on sanction (Notice or Probation) remained consistent.

Figure 2. Overall Evaluation Outcomes of Comprehensive Evaluations, AY 2018 to 2022



¹ Please note that the Carnegie Classifications of institutions with similar attributes were consolidated into "groups" to facilitate the presentation of data in this paper. Specifically, associate's colleges, in this report, included associate's, baccalaureate/associate's, and special focus two-year colleges; and baccalaureate colleges included baccalaureate and special focus four-year colleges. All other Classifications were unchanged. For more information on the Carnegie Classifications, please visit [Carnegie Classifications | Basic Classification \(acenet.edu\)](https://www.acenet.edu).

In the context of the most recent five-year data trend, evaluation outcomes have improved as the proportion of institutions that were found in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation without concerns increased by 9 percentage points (from 36% to 45%), and the proportions of those with assigned interim monitoring decreased by 11 percentage points since AY 2018.

Evaluation Outcomes by Carnegie Classification

A breakdown of AY 2022 evaluation outcomes by Carnegie Classification, shown in Figure 3, indicates that the proportion of institutions that were found in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation without concerns was highest among doctoral institutions (n=3, 60%), followed by associate's colleges (n=16, 50%), master's (n=12, 46%), and others.

The proportion of institutions that were assigned interim monitoring was highest among doctoral/professional institutions (n=3, 75%) and tribal colleges (n=3, 75%), followed by master's institutions (n=14, 54%), associate's colleges (n=16, 50%), baccalaureate and special-focus 4-year colleges (45%), and doctoral institutions (n=2, 40%). The 4 institutions that were placed on sanction were baccalaureate or special-focus 4-year colleges.

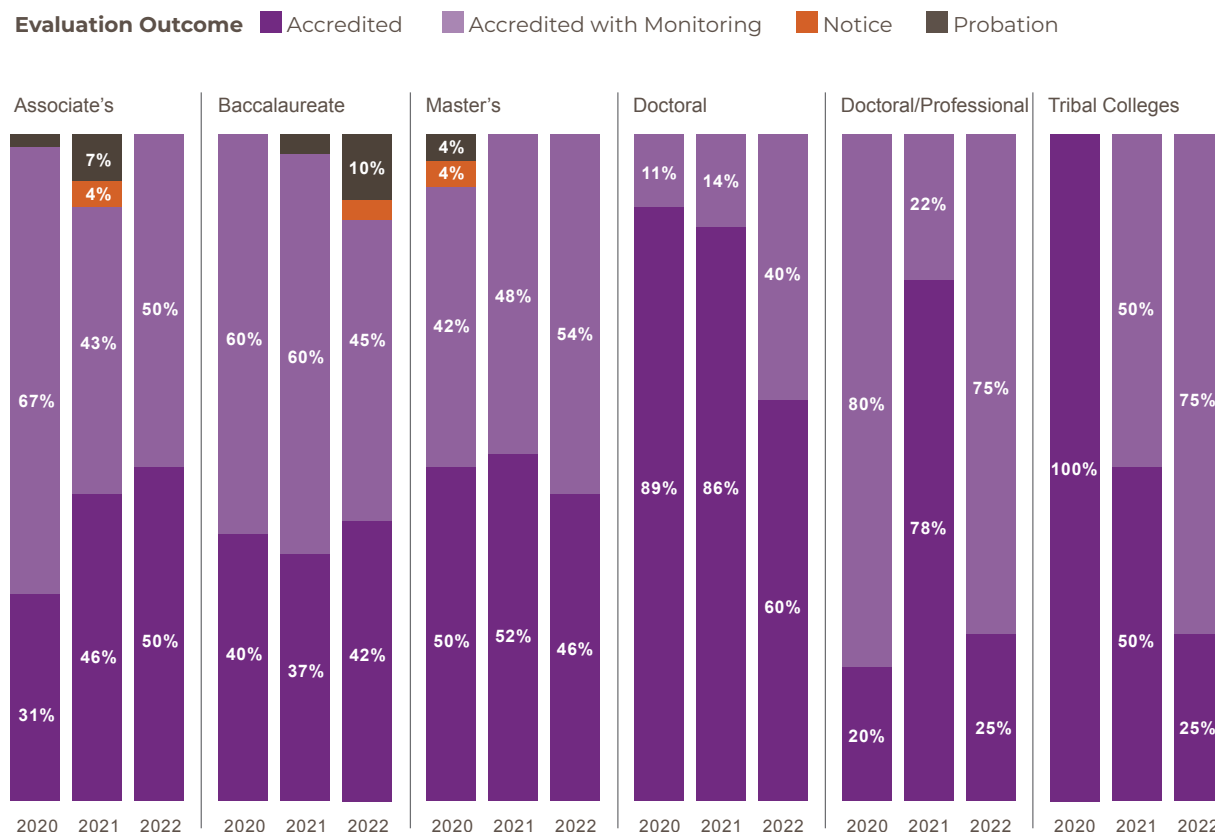
Figure 3. Evaluation Outcomes by Carnegie Classification, AY 2022

Carnegie Classification Group	Accredited		Accredited w Monitoring		Notice		Probation		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Associate's	16	50%	16	50%					32	100%
Baccalaureate	13	42%	14	45%	1	3%	3	10%	31	100%
Master's	12	46%	14	54%					26	100%
Doctoral	3	60%	2	40%					5	100%
Doctoral/Professional	1	25%	3	75%					4	100%
Tribal Colleges	1	25%	3	75%					4	100%
Total	46	45%	52	51%	1	1%	3	3%	102	100%

As indicated in Figure 4, in the last three years, the proportions of associate's colleges in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation without concerns has improved from 31% to 50%, a gain of nearly 20 percentage points. Among baccalaureate and master's institutions, which did not undergo a major shift like associate's colleges, the proportions of institutions with full compliance without any concerns are currently at 42% and 46%, respectively.

While the outcomes of doctoral institutions were more consistent over recent years in comparison to those of doctoral/professional and tribal institutions, the large fluctuations in the year-over-year outcomes for these groups are influenced by their small numbers. In AY 2022 the proportion of institutions assigned with interim monitoring was 40% among doctoral institutions and 75% for both doctoral/professional and tribal institutions.

Figure 4. **Evaluation Outcomes by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020 to AY 2022**



Evaluation Outcomes by Core Components of the Criteria for Accreditation

Figure 5 provides a summary of the AY 2022 evaluation findings on each Core Component of the Criteria for Accreditation.

Figure 5. **Evaluation Outcomes by Core Component of Criteria for Accreditation, AY 2022**

Compliance Rating Core Component Short Description	Met		Met With Concerns		Not Met		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1A Mission publicly articulated and operationalized	101	99%	1	1%			102	100%
1B Mission and public good	102	100%					102	100%
1C Mission and diversity of society	97	95%	5	5%			102	100%
2A Integrity	96	94%	5	5%	1	1%	102	100%
2B Transparency	97	95%	4	4%	1	1%	102	100%
2C Sufficient Board autonomy	99	97%	3	3%			102	100%
2D Academic freedom and freedom of expression	101	99%	1	1%			102	100%
2E Knowledge acquisition, discovery & application	102	100%					102	100%
3A Academic offerings appropriate to higher education	97	95%	4	4%	1	1%	102	100%
3B Exercise of intellectual inquiry integral to programs	98	96%	4	4%			102	100%
3C Sufficiency of faculty and staff	93	91%	9	9%			102	100%
3D Support for student learning and effective teaching	102	100%					102	100%
4A Ensuring quality of educational offerings	89	87%	13	13%			102	100%
4B Assessment of student learning	69	68%	32	31%	1	1%	102	100%
4C Persistence, retention, and completion outcomes	93	91%	9	9%			102	100%
5A Effective governance and administrative structures	94	92%	7	7%	1	1%	102	100%
5B Resource base	86	84%	15	15%	1	1%	102	100%
5C Systematic and integrated planning & improvement	86	84%	13	13%	3	3%	102	100%

As indicated in Figure 5, all institutions (100%) were found in compliance without concerns (“Met”) with Core Components 1.B, 2.E, and 3.D. Aside from that, the percent of institutions evaluated as “Met with concerns” or “Not Met” ranged from a low of 1% (in Core Components 1.A, 2.D) to a high of 32% (in Core Component 4.B). The higher frequency in citations, namely at or above 8% of the total evaluations, occurred in seven Core Components.

Most Frequently Cited Core Components

The most frequently cited Core Components, based on the number and proportion of compliance findings as “Met with concerns” or “Not Met”, included the following:

- 4.B Assessment of student learning (n=33, 32%)
- 5.B Resource base (n=16, 16%)
- 5.C Systematic and integrated planning and improvement (n=16, 16%)
- 4.A Ensuring quality of educational offerings (n=13, 13%)
- 3.C Sufficiency of faculty and staff (n=9, 9%)
- 4.C Persistence, retention, and completion outcomes (n=9, 9%.)

Notably, Core Component 4.B continued to be the most cited area of concern, with citations in nearly a third (32%) of all evaluations. The proportion of citations regarding Core Component 4.B increased 4 percentage points from last year’s level, which showed a noticeable decline when compared to each of the prior three years.

The composition of the most frequently cited Core Components in AY 2022 was consistent with the trend established in the past five years and closely modeled the ranking order in AY 2021.

Figure 6. **Most Frequently Cited Core Components, AY 2018 to AY 2022**

Most Frequently Cited Core Components					
By the Combined Percent of “Met with Concerns” or “Not Met” Citations					
Rank/Year	AY 2022	AY 2021	AY 2020	AY 2019	AY 2018
Rank 1	4.B 32.4%	4.B 27.9%	4.B 34.9%	4.B 42.2%	4.B 36.5%
Rank 2	5.B 15.7%	5.B 14.4%	5.C 16.3%	4.A 24.7%	5.C 22.3%
Rank 3	5.C 15.7%	5.C 14.4%	5.B 11.6%	5.C 17.5%	5.B 19.6%
Rank 4	4.A 12.7%	4.A 11.5%	3C 9.3%	5.B 14.3%	4.A 17.6%
Rank 5	3.C & 4.C 8.8%	3.C 10.6%	4.A 8.5%	3.C 12.3%	4.C 14.9%

(*) Evaluative results by Core Component prior to AY 2021 have been recoded to reflect the current Criteria

(**) Ranking order in AY 2021-22 was based on the completed evaluations (n=102, 99% of total).

Most Frequently Cited Core Components: Analysis by Carnegie Classification

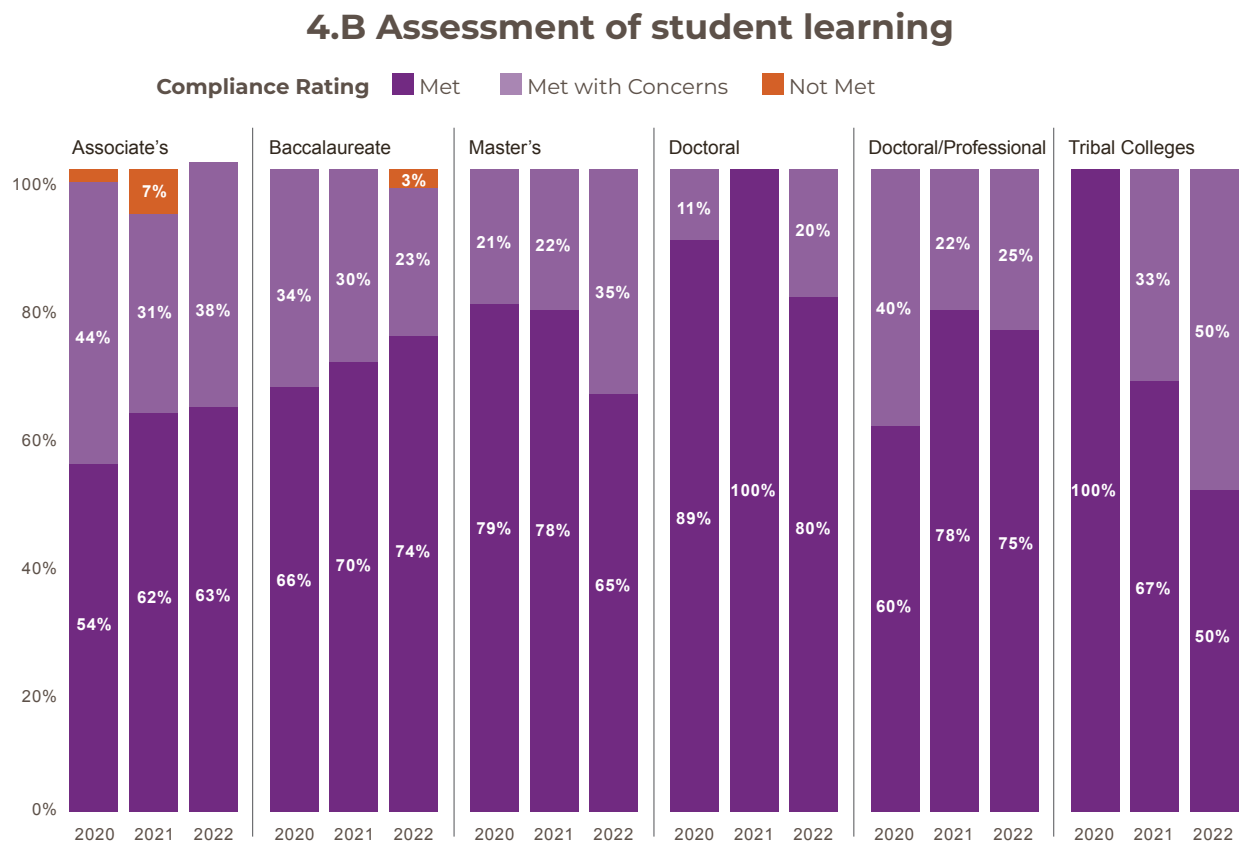
A breakdown of the findings in the most frequently cited Core Components by Carnegie Classification provides institutional context for further examination of the areas of challenge institutions are facing. The analysis explores the most frequently cited Core Components in AY 2022, starting with Core Component 4.B. Please keep in mind the small per-year count of institutions in three Carnegie Classification categories, namely, doctoral, doctoral/professional, and tribal institutions, when considering the reported percentages.

Core Component 4.B

As noted in Figure 7, over the last three years (AY 2020 to AY 2022) the frequency of citations in 4.B was reduced from 46% to 38% among associate’s colleges and from 34% to 26% among baccalaureate colleges. Conversely, the frequency of citations among master’s institutions increased from 21% to 35%.

In addition, the frequency of citations in AY 2022 was 20% among doctoral institutions, 25% among doctoral/professional institutions, and 50% among tribal colleges.

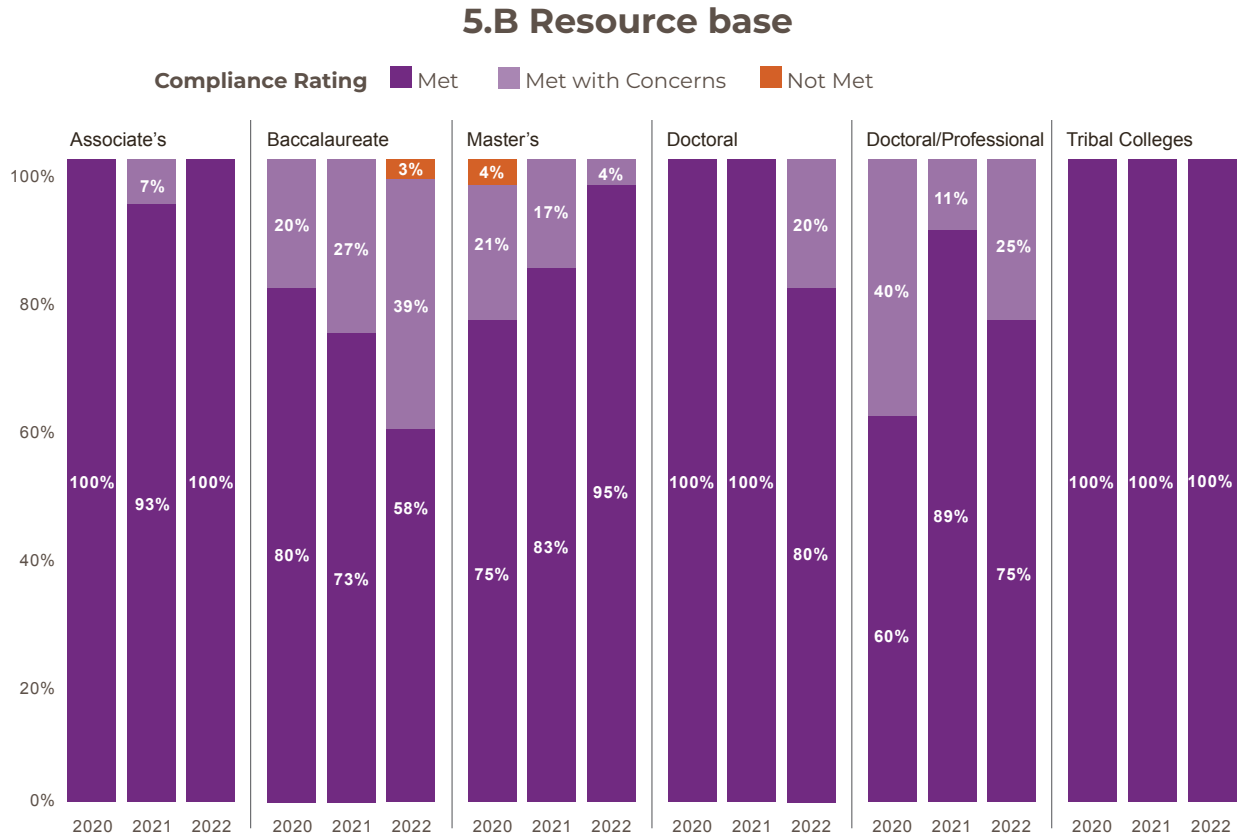
Figure 7. **Compliance with Core Component 4.B by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020- AY 2022**



Core Component 5.B

As indicated in Figure 8, the frequency of citations in Core Component 5.B was trending upward among baccalaureate colleges, moving from 20% in AY 2020 to 42% in AY 2022. Conversely, a decreasing trend in the frequency of citations was found among master’s institutions, changing from 25% to 4%, and among doctoral/professional institutions (from 40% to 25%). The frequency of citations among doctoral institutions in AY 2022 was 20%.

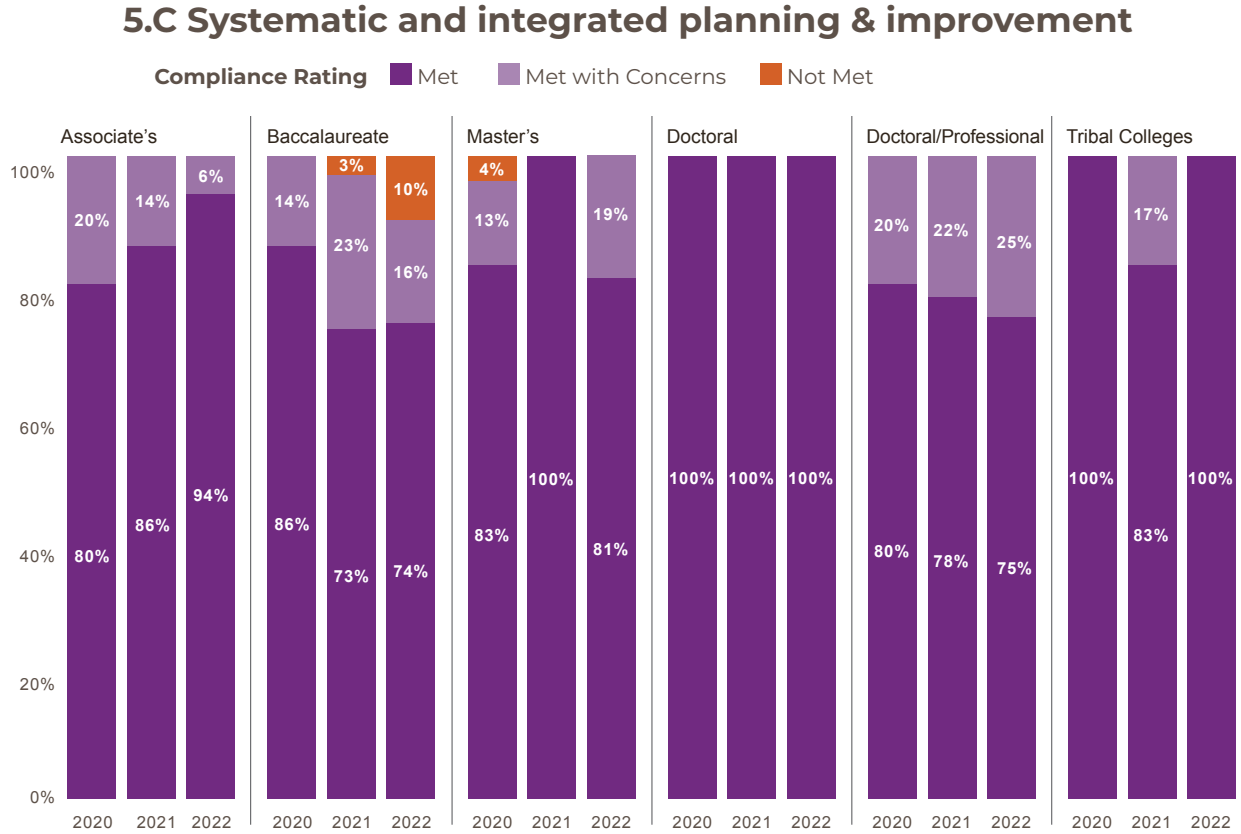
Figure 8. **Compliance with Core Component 5.B by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020- AY 2022**



Core Component 5.C

Among the institutions cited for Core Component 5.C in AY 2022, baccalaureate colleges had the highest proportion of citations (26%), followed by doctoral/professional institutions (25%), master’s institutions (19%), and associate’s colleges (6%).

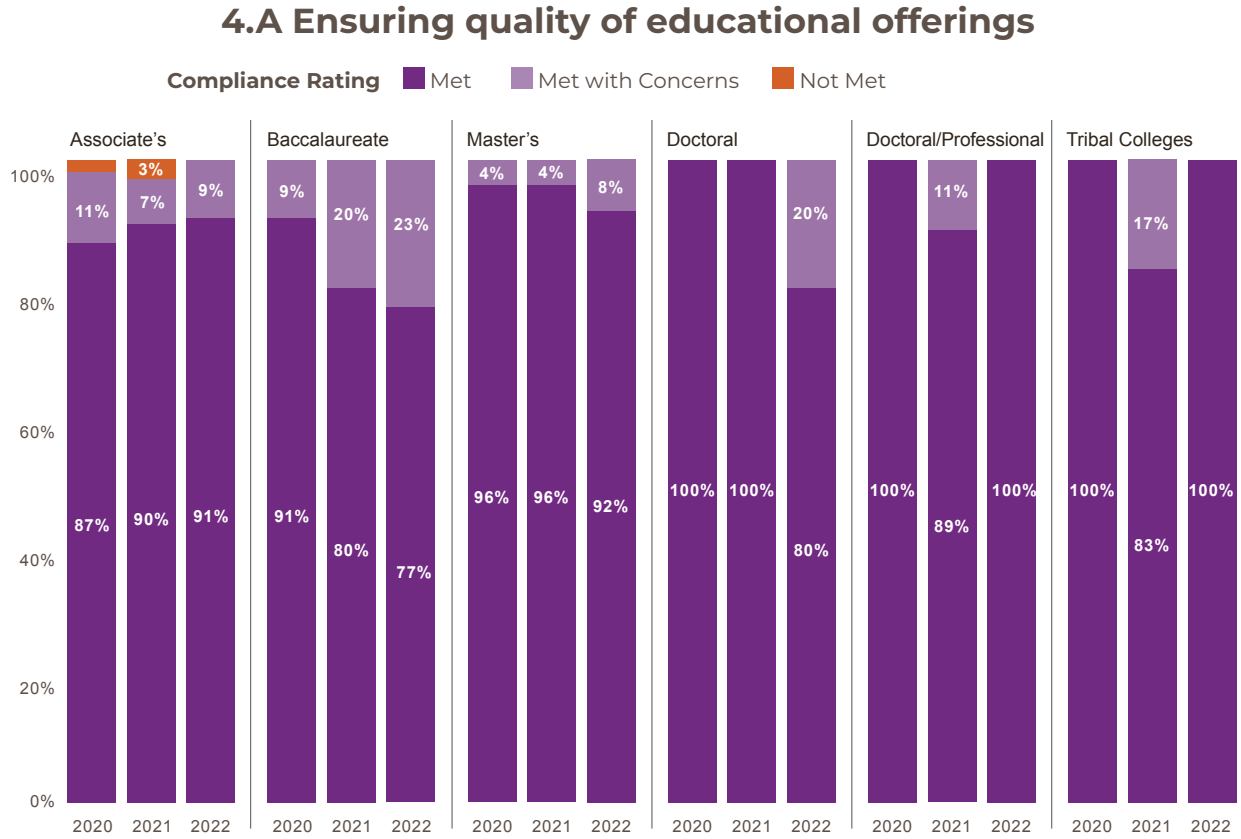
Figure 9. **Compliance with Core Component 5.C by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020-AY 2022**



Core Component 4.A

As depicted in Figure 10, the frequency of citations in Core Component 4.A among baccalaureate colleges increased from 9% in AY 2020 to 23% in AY 2022, while associate’s colleges had a decrease from 13% to 9% in the same period.

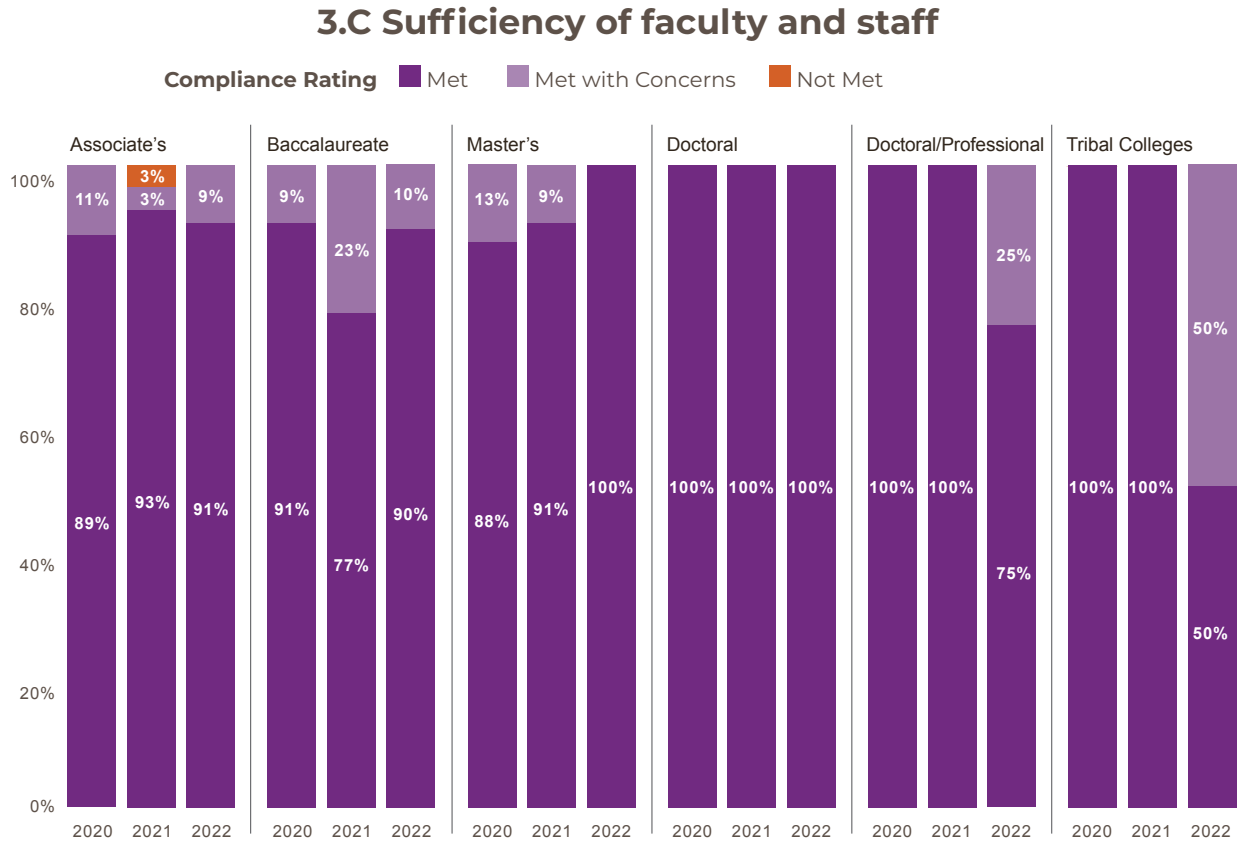
Figure 10. **Compliance with Core Component 4.A by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020- AY 2022**



Core Component 3.C

In AY 2022 the overall proportion of institutions being cited in 3.C was 9%, a decrease of 2 percentage points from the previous year’s level. Specifically, associate’s colleges had 9% citations, baccalaureate colleges had 10%, doctoral/professional institutions had 25%, and tribal colleges had 50% citations.

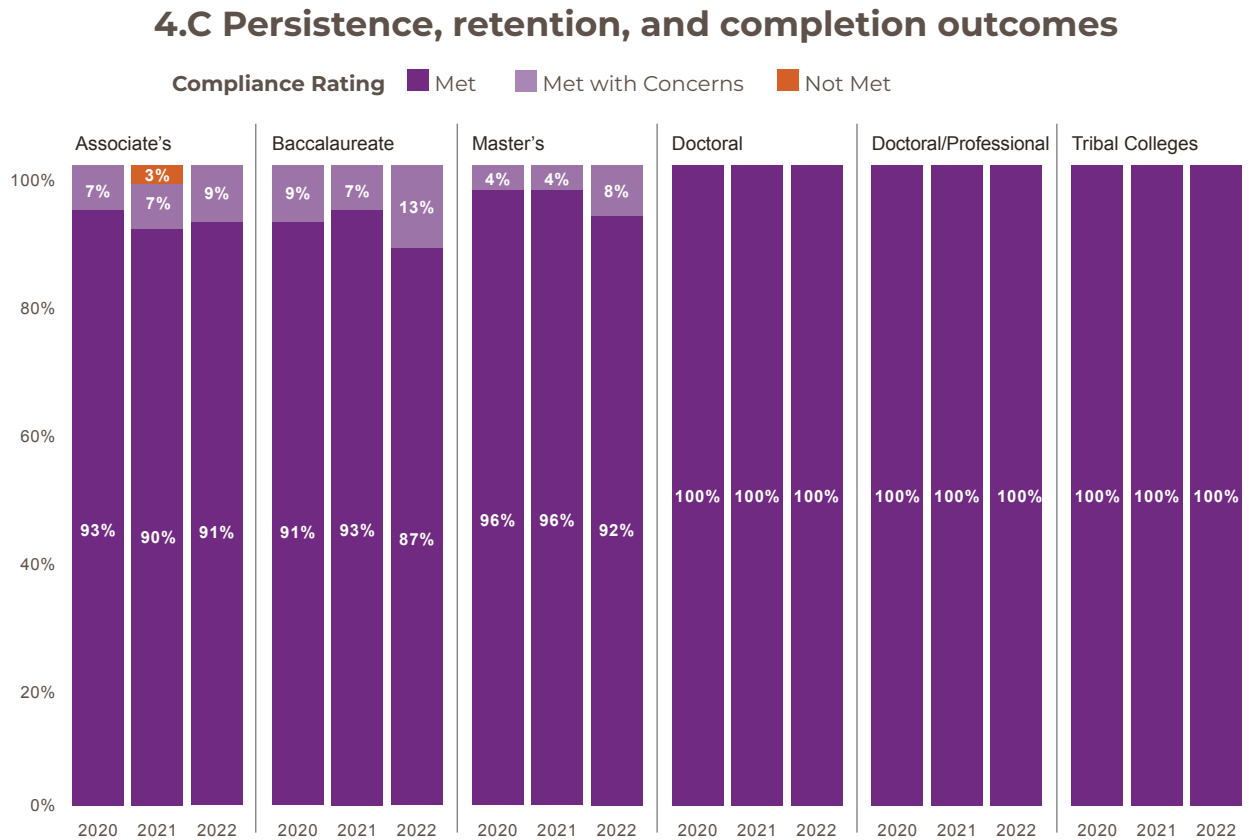
Figure 11. **Compliance with Core Component 3.C by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020- AY 2022**



Core Component 4.C

In the last three years, citations relative to Core Components 4.C were largely given to associate's, baccalaureate, and master's institutions. Currently baccalaureate colleges had the highest frequency of citations (13%), followed by associate's colleges (9%), and master's institutions (8%). HLC's exploration of data sources related to such measures of student success is ongoing.

Figure 12. **Compliance with Core Component 4.C by Carnegie Classification, AY 2020- AY 2022**



Implications for Practice

The findings from comprehensive evaluation results over the last five years consistently highlight areas of concern relative to Core Components 3.C, 4.A, 4.B, 4.C, 5.B, and 5.C, and underscore the wide range of issues that institutions are facing.

In continuing efforts to address these areas of concern, HLC has strengthened resources for institutions in preparation for comprehensive evaluations and developed new targeted training and education offerings for the member institutions and Peer Corps members alike. This work entails expansion of workshop offerings, continued delivery of HLC's speaker's series and expansion of webinar offerings to meet the needs of institutions and peer reviewers efficiently and effectively.

HLC staff will continue to strengthen engagement with the Peer Corps to ensure common understanding and consistent application of the Criteria for Accreditation in practice. For example, the upcoming Peer Corps Updates and Training at the 2023 Annual Conference will feature focused sessions on Core Component 5.C, which will replicate a similar focus on Core Component 4.B during the 2022 event. Because HLC has formally initiated the next update of its Criteria for Accreditation (effective September 1, 2025), several listening sessions will also occur at the 2023 Annual Conference and will be informed, in large part, by the trends identified in this report and prior iterations of this analysis.

Finally, the analysis of compliance by Core Component of the Criteria provides insights into specific institutional segments based on the Carnegie Classification and their areas of challenge. These insights are particularly relevant and timely as HLC staff continue to work on identifying the underlying connections among and potential synergistic effects of three major initiatives under HLC's EVOLVE 2025 strategic plan. These include differential accreditation, enhanced focus on student success measures that are sensitive to institutional mission and context, along with the next iteration of HLC's Criteria for Accreditation.